

North Herts Council Corporate Peer Challenge – November 2024
Action Plan adopted by Cabinet 18 March 2025

No.	Recommendation	Action	Led By	Timescale	Update (early September 2025)	
1	Develop the golden thread	<p>We will use the Council Delivery Plan to continue to reflect the major projects that will support the delivery of our Council Plan. We will review our corporate KPIs (supported by an Internal Audit) to assess how they can be improved to reflect our priorities and also provide challenging targets that help to drive improvement</p> <p>Alongside the Council Delivery Plan, we will continue to use internal Service Plans to reflect the other key tasks in each Directorate. These will have a focus on supporting the Council Plan, but will also incorporate other statutory requirements. Where appropriate, we will use Service KPIs to support Service Managers and Directors to assess performance.</p> <p>Leadership Team will review all the projects on the Council Delivery Plan and Service Plans on a quarterly basis. This will help manage the delivery of projects and also ensure that they continue to align with the Council Plan and priorities. Executive Members will also be kept informed of progress against Service Plans. Cabinet (through quarterly updates on the Council Delivery Plan) will have regular opportunities to determine any projects that should be included at that level, as well as assess delivery of existing projects, KPIs and risks.</p>	<p>Exec Member & Director – Resources</p> <p>Executive Members and Directors</p> <p>Executive Members and Directors</p>	<p>Report to 24th June Cabinet/ 17th June O&S as part of the annual update of the Council Delivery Plan.</p> <p>From start of new civic year</p> <p>From start of new civic year</p>	<p>Report to PLB (July and August) on areas of Council Plan that could link to KPIs. Agreed that would look to add measures that link to Council Plan outcomes for the Q2 report (January)</p> <p>Service plans have been adopted using these principles</p> <p>To be circulated to Leadership Team when prepared for Risk and Performance Management Group. Took place for the Q1 report in August.</p> <p>Service Plans to capture projects that are not on the Council Delivery Plan.</p>	

		<p>We will carry out a budget consultation exercise during summer 2025 to help inform our budget setting process for 2026/27 onwards. We will use this alongside the 3-year settlement for 2026-29 to assess our funding priorities. This will inform the areas where we will make savings to achieve a balanced budget.</p>	Exec Member & Director – Resources	Summer 2025	Budget consultation took place throughout June and July. Feedback has been captured and is being analysed.	
		<p>The Digital Transformation oversight group will review what software and processes should be a transformation priority to maximise the organisational benefits. These could be direct financial benefits or through reducing effort that frees up Officer time.</p>	Director – Customers	April 2025	The review is now considering the impact of Local Government Reorganisation and whether we need to speed up, slow down, or stop different elements of the programme (see rec 9).	
		<p>We have carried out a review of the capital programme to assess the likely timing of delivery and any projects no longer needed. The budget setting process for 2025/26 has also provided an opportunity to assess new and existing proposals. We will add new capital projects (e.g. Churchgate) when we have a defined plan and a reliable estimate of timing and costs.</p>	Exec Member & Director – Resources	Ongoing review	Council report July 2025 flags the capital implications of the Churchgate project, although it is still too early to attach figures to the project.	
		<p>As staff regular performance reviews are carried out, the priorities within them will be linked to the priorities in the Council Plan, Council Delivery Plan and Service Plans.</p>	All managers	Ongoing	Leadership Team will monitor completion of RPRs, as part of regular HR update	
2	Prioritise	<p>We will use the Council Delivery Plan to track progress against our key corporate projects. As well as the formal discussion of this at Cabinet, we will also start to discuss it on a regular basis at Political</p>	PLB	Ongoing	Initial prioritisation discussion at June PLB, followed by Executive Members and Directors reviewing priorities for their areas and feeding back to the Leader,	

		Liaison Board. We will agree which are the most important priorities for North Hertfordshire. This will allow earlier discussion of how the projects are helping to deliver our priorities and any blockages to delivery. Where blockages are caused by staffing resources we can assess where there may be opportunities to prioritise projects, based on the staff required (as usually requires specialist knowledge and skills) and relative importance of projects.			Deputy Leader and Chief Executive. Prioritisation considerations also need to include the resource requirements needed to support the LGR programme. This will be further considered during the upcoming budget cycle.	
3	Place Narrative	<p>Subject to securing suitable funding, we will seek additional capacity to identify the opportunities available to promote our North Herts Place Narrative across the district.</p> <p>The most effective opportunities will then be included in a Marketing & Communications plan that the consultancy will be responsible for creating, executing, and measuring, with support from the North Herts Council communications and Economic Development teams.</p>	Exec Members & Director - Customers, Director – Enterprise	Summer 2025	Due to local government reorganisation in Hertfordshire, it has been agreed not to actively pursue this work. We will continue to use the North Herts Place Narrative assets but will not commit resource to actively promoting it.	
4	Partnerships	<p>We will continue to look for opportunities with partners, wherever interests can be aligned.</p> <p>We will continue to work closely with Herts Growth Board, HCCSP and others, taking leading roles where appropriate.</p>	<p>Cabinet and Leadership Team</p> <p>Cabinet and Leadership Team</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>We are discussing with neighbouring councils potential opportunities through LGR eg housing, planning.</p> <p>CEx is on the LGR programme board, overseeing whole programme. CEx and Director Customers are strategic leads for two of the workstreams, with all other Directors (and some senior managers) also involved in</p>	

		The new leadership team structure includes a strategic health lead, which seeks to work more closely with the NHS through the work of the ICB.	Director Regulatory	From 1 April 2025	<p>working groups. The Leader is taking an active role at Herts Leaders Group and is the new Chair of the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership.</p> <p>We continue to try to engage with health to explore opportunities for greater co-operation, however the ICB is currently focussed on their own restructure.</p>	
5	Leadership	<p>A leadership team restructure has been agreed and will be in place from 1 April 2025. There will also be further changes in the leadership team during the course of 2025, with two retirements. We will put in place a learning and development programme to integrate new members to the Leadership Team, build relationships and explore ways to re-energise the organisation, with visible officer leadership and more strategic impact.</p> <p>We will look to create opportunities for more in-person communications, for example an annual staff conference, attending different team meetings and visiting front line service areas.</p>	<p>Chief Executive and Directors</p> <p>Leadership Team</p>	<p>From 1 April 2025</p> <p>From 1 April 2025</p>	<p>The new structure has been implemented and two new directors appointed. The Cabinet portfolios have been aligned to the director responsibilities, to streamline and simplify arrangements. The learning and development programme for LT is being designed, to take place in the autumn.</p> <p>The first staff conference was delivered, with three sessions taking place during September.</p>	
6	Organisational Development	We will create a new HR strategy that reflects our priorities and how we develop existing staff and recruit new staff to deliver them. As we know that there will be some changes in the Leadership Team over the summer, we will do the majority of this work over the Autumn to ensure that it can capture the views of the new Directors.	Exec Member & Director - Resources	Autumn 2025	Still planned for Autumn, but now also considering impact of LGR. Shortens the timeframe for the strategy and therefore may be a different focus.	

		<p>We will be clear on the importance of learning and development, even when there is a need to reduce our spend. We will use our new Learning Management System to help with accessing training.</p> <p>We will review how we carry out our Regular Performance Reviews (appraisal) to make it simple, effective and aligned to the golden thread.</p> <p>We will use workforce data to inform how we address succession planning, recruitment and retention, with appropriate plans in place.</p>		In place and ongoing	<p>Consider as part of HR strategy</p> <p>We will consider benefit of change as part of HR Strategy</p> <p>To include in HR Strategy work</p>	
7	Ways of Working	<p>We will relaunch our values with Officers and Councillors. This includes listening to and considering the views of each other, and work together and support each other to be the best organisation we can be.</p> <p>Executive members will present committee reports at meetings</p> <p>We will look at light touch staff surveys to check in with staff, which can also be used to reinforce expectations of behaviour.</p> <p>We will review our approach to whistleblowing training, in order to raise awareness across the organisation.</p> <p>We will consider adoption of any new model Code of conduct for Councillors</p>	<p>Member training champions and Leadership Team</p> <p>Cabinet</p> <p>Director - Resources</p> <p>Director - Governance</p> <p>Standards committee/</p>	<p>Summer 2025</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Summer 2025 and ongoing</p> <p>Start of new civic year</p> <p>When available</p>	<p>Considering ways to make our values more memorable as part of the HR strategy.</p> <p>This is the practice adopted</p> <p>We included wellbeing questions as part of a recent survey (during August) on LGR.</p> <p>Whistleblowing training has been delivered to Directors and representatives from each directorate.</p> <p>New code awaited. In the meantime, Council adopted the</p>	

			Director - Governance		Code of Good Practice for Statutory Officers.	
8	Performance Management	<p>We have updated the Council Delivery Plan to be clearer on any indicators that do not meet the green performance threshold. The report highlights the actions that will be taken to seek to improve performance, and we will continue to work on the explanations that Cabinet and O&S need.</p> <p>Internal Audit will benchmark our performance indicators to see how the measures and the target values compare to others. We will use that audit report to reflect on how we use the indicators to drive improvement</p> <p>We will also have an annual review of indicators that consistently achieve a green rating to assess how realistic it would be to set a more stretching target, and the benefits to residents that it would provide.</p>	Exec Member & Director – Resources	<p>Completed</p> <p>Report to 24th June Cabinet/ 17th June O&S as part of the annual update of the Council Delivery Plan.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>To consider KPIs that link to the Council Plan as part of Q2 report (January).</p> <p>Cabinet reviewed the KPI targets in the June report.</p>	
9	Modernisation	The digital transformation initiative is a key component of our corporate plan, guided by an Oversight group that provides strategic direction and prioritisation. This programme encompasses the upskilling of staff across the Council and the provision of appropriate tools to support their roles. Several workstreams are currently underway, including a partnership with an apprenticeship provider to develop skills in business transformation, AI, and data insights.	Exec Member & Director - Customers	Ongoing	The programme is ongoing and has helped support the launch of the new waste contract. The programme is being reviewed and reprioritised in light of LGR, however appropriate transformation work continues. We have recently piloted an internal app using a Microsoft workspace and have introduced an AI telephony solution. This gives additional capability and aligns with the digital strategy	

		<p>A significant aspect of the digital programme involves the review and redesign of Council processes to enhance efficiency. We have recruited a dedicated Digital Business Analyst (BA) for this purpose, and through this work, we anticipate the transfer and upskilling of BA skills. Ongoing engagement with staff and Councillors is planned, alongside the development of our rolling communications plan.</p> <p>Additionally, a controlled pilot of using AI (Microsoft Copilot) is underway to identify use cases and assess the potential efficiency impact across various areas within the Council.</p>		<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Currently considering the next potential cohort to undertake courses with the apprenticeship provider, this is likely to be in early 2026 once the current cohort have completed and can share the benefits / successes of the programme.</p> <p>We are also supporting digital inclusion and upskilling across the district by partnering with North Herts & Stevenage CVS to deliver a range of digital inclusion initiatives</p> <p>This work was temporarily paused as the lead on this changed role. Since October 25 there has been a new Lead for this project and so this work has re-started, initially exploring how Copilot can be used across the organisation alongside other tools such as Robotic Process Automation, or a digital solution built in Netcall or on MS Workspace</p>	
10	Project Management	<p>See response to recommendation 2, which covers resourcing of ongoing projects. For larger capital projects we will move towards incorporating project management into the capital cost, to reflect the required capacity and ensuring the total cost is considered as part of the overall project appraisal.</p> <p>We have a process for collecting lessons learnt from projects. By improving the</p>	Exec Member & Director - Resources	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Churchgate report to July Council sought budget for the appointment of an experienced project manager, to help support the delivery of the project. This was approved and an individual recruited.</p> <p>Reports will come to LT when completed, or on an exception</p>	

		project reporting to Leadership Team (included in the response to recommendation 1) we will have better understanding on when smaller projects have completed, so can work with those project managers to ensure that we collate lessons learnt. Having more lessons learnt, which may also be more relevant to a wider audience, will allow us to produce regular updates to share across the Council.			basis as required. Lessons learned exercise to be completed for the wasted contract procurement and service change roll out.	
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